

IIF Symposium Toronto - Jason Ryle

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[pause]

00:18 Jason Ryle: Hi everyone! It's great to see so many people here, I wish I was part of the session all day today and this afternoon, but unfortunately I have other things to take care of. [laughter] I hope you've been enjoying the festival so far, and I hope you partaken in the rest of the festival, I think we're at the mid-way point right now, so there's plenty more screenings to see, so please take advantage of those. I'll also say, get your tickets for everything for the rest of the festival that you are planning to attend please. A lot of things are soon to go rush I think. So, very happy to have and host this event here. We're a very proud partner of IIF, and when we met last September in Montreal, it really just, from a personal point of view, it really captivated and reflected a lot of what I'm personally interested in and I think what we're going to be doing through this project that I'll talk about for 2017.

01:18 JR: As a sci-fi and comic book nerd, life-long, I've always been really interested obviously in science fiction and the future, and in different parallel realities, multi-verse. And growing up I was always really curious about what my grandparents, what my older ancestors would have thought about the future. I think in terms when we talk about indigenous futurism, very often it's about omens and prophecies. Most of them are didactic for how we live today, but I was actually really concerned about a linear conception of time, a specific place in the future. 'Cause we had that with seven generations teachings. I mean there was some understanding of linear time, I mean there was an understanding of linear time.

01:58 JR: So this really kind of all coalesced a couple years ago when we started to think about Canada 150 and what, if anything, Imaginative was gonna do to commemorate this year. And I vacillated, I thought "Okay, no, I'm not gonna do anything. That's gonna be the subversion." But I wanted to do something, and contemplating 150 years from 2017, looking back, it's not something necessarily I wanted to do. So the idea struck me that I'll do a film commission set in 2167, it references a particular time, but it very actively moves us to the future in a very positive, empowering way. Initially we had thought about it being a film commission and we were moving forward with it initially as a film commission, but then back in May of this year Nyla innuksuk?

03:00 Speaker 2: She was here.

03:00 Speaker 3: Oh.

03:00 JR: She was here.

03:01 S2: Yeah.

03:01 JR: So, Nyla, who was here earlier from [03:03] , she brought over a Google cardboard to the office, and it was my first...

03:08 S3: Tell people what it is.

03:10 JR: Oh okay, I should have brought one. So Google cardboard is just this device you can buy for like 20 bucks, it's like a flat piece of cardboard that you just tear off the bits you need to tear off, and you fold it up into a visor, that you actually slip your smartphone into. And the content you see is work that was created by a 360 camera, so it's VR but in a very accessible way using your smartphone. So this device which with the apps that you get, it's split screen, and one you look at it through this visor, it creates the virtual environment, 360 environment.

03:49 JR: So the first thing that I saw is I was hanging from a helicopter flying over Manhattan, and you could see everything around you, it was really, really extraordinary. I think for anyone who is creative or anyone who is looking at these things, the first few seconds you put this thing on, your synapses start firing, you have loads of ideas about what you can do for this, and within seconds I thought this is what I want 2167, the project to be, to create these virtual 360 environments, set in the year 2167.

04:23 JR: We have partnered with of course these guys, and a couple of other partners that I am not sure we're supposed to talk about yet. But the idea is to identify six indigenous film-makers, artists, to create these work set in 2167. And as with all our commissions, often we start from a starting point, but we really did 'carte blanche' to be the artist to create this environment, 'cause I am really fascinated about what our indigenous media artists will do when given the task and the challenge of looking so far ahead. I don't know if it's gonna be dystopic, I don't know if it's gonna be a return to nature, I don't know if it's gonna be just something purely conceptual, but that's so exciting. And I mean it's just such a perfect pairing I think, with this particular project that we are talking about, specifically, and the partners involved are all very excited, the artists are all very excited.

05:19 JR: I'm not exactly sure when we are gonna be doing a public announcement about it, the festival kinda got in the way in terms of planning. But the idea is to have these accessible, so in two years, when we plan to launch this, when the works will be done, conceptualization and research [05:34] November-ish hopefully until spring of next year, within development for about a year after that, until the actual production of the pieces. But I think it's an incredibly exciting thing and it's a new medium.

05:50 JR: I was at a VR conference in Toronto a couple of weeks ago, this local meet-up organization called, 'We are wearables', and they focus on it specifically. So this is the wearable technology, and it was really mind-blowing, and one of the things... There were a couple of things that people constantly said. So one of them was this is a new medium entirely, we don't quite know how to tell stories. There were people showing examples of storyboards and they were like 360 degree storyboards rather than just panels. Different ideas of what scripts are, so everyone is really kind of making it along, and they've got four or five people that said, "Well, this is the wild west." And I was like, "Well, there were Indians in the wild west, we have to make sure that we have an indigenous presence in VR." And also to just with everyone in the panel, the vast majority of them were male, were of European descent. And I think it's really important I think to the artists we are selecting, because of diversity from cultures, from regions, for gender as well, and I think that's it. Is there anything you should prompt me?

07:02 S2: We're not allowed to tell any of the artists names yet, so...

07:04 S3: Yeah.

07:05 S2: That took off a whole five minutes.

[laughter]

07:08 JR: But with any kind of questions... Has anyone actually experienced VR? So we can...

[07:14] [redacted] the arcade on the second floor there are demonstrations with the cardboard visor but also with Oculus Rift. So one of the things that we, as the project organizers, have to yet figure out is what device are we actually going to have these available for? The Oculus comes out next year and they reckon it's gonna be, what 500 Canadian. There are actually quite a large number of apps, 360 VR apps that are available now, that you can use with these things. And that certainly is a much more accessible way to engage with this work, than with a \$500 device that you have to buy and is still kind of cumbersome. But for us we think, one of the messages that was very clear from this conference that I was at a couple of weeks ago, was that in about a year from now, there's gonna be such a high demand for content on this platform. So it's a great time, I think, for us to really put this out there and like with film, have indigenous people reflected in this medium right from the get-go. Archer?

08:23 S3: I am also a member of the [08:25] [redacted] which is called Village Island BC, so I want to put up my hands to you Jason, personally, and to the Imaginative Festival. I have watched Imaginative become not just the biggest presenter of aboriginal new media, but now a commissioner of aboriginal media. Look around this room, this is a small gathering. And I look around this room and I say this is because of the work you guys are doing and thank you for being the biggest promoters of new media from Aborigine Indian country on the planet, as far as I can tell.

[applause]

09:02 JR: Thank you very much, that's really touching to me and I'm not gonna cry this time.

[laughter]

09:11 JR: But part of that is really because we try to make the festival, in the best way we can, reflective of what's being created by you guys. And I'm really, really excited about VR and the 360 camera. These guys can probably share some more light in terms of the more technical aspects of things. But check out the demonstrations, so Nyla has been doing a demonstration downstairs, it's every day, so today, tomorrow and Sunday. The dates of it are actually in the catalogue so you can check that out. But it actually, when you first experience it, it is something so new and you just think, "You know, if I were sort of commissioned to create one of these VR pieces and I'm not, maybe I'll do my own thing."

09:54 JR: You just think of being immersed in an environment that you can look every which way around. It could be a film and you could be surrounded by a Nation of People. It can be conceptual,

it can be artistic, it can be some kind of linear choose-your-own-adventure type narrative because that's what they're trying to figure out right now is how do we incorporate all this different technology, including technology that maybe it's scary to some, that can read where you're looking as sort of like the 'clicking' option to head in a certain direction. Or it's incorporating sensor gloves you can actually interact in these environments and pick things up and open doors and move things or swim, or whatever it is...

10:34 JR: So, I guess as a parting word, I mean, we're at the ground floor in this medium in a lot of ways. Nyla Innuksuk, there was a Playback article about her, calling the queen of VR. So she really is at the forefront of these. She was doing something with Philip Glass, the composer. She was brought down to Ecuador to film the Pope giving this, whatever popes do to like 100,000 people.

11:03 S2: A benediction?

11:05 JR: Yeah, a benediction, I was gonna say eulogy but that's the wrong word.

[laughter]

11:10 JR: So, yeah, engage with it and once you all try it, you're gonna each have a hundred different ideas about the work that you can do, and I can't wait to see that. I can't wait to have that at the festival going forward. But we'll be releasing more information about 2167 as it comes, we're not sure yet exactly if we're gonna go for Canada 150 money because that puts it under a certain umbrella. And for us, part of it is the sovereignty, not just now but sovereignty looking forward, and sovereignty in this virtual space as well, so we'll see. And also the Canada 150, it beholds you to a certain umbrella and a certain kind of presentation window.

11:48 Speaker 4: Have you been talking to the people at OCAD? I was just looking around if there was anybody else from OCAD, is anybody here?

11:52 S3: Ryan's here.

11:55 JR: No we haven't yet, this is still really... It's still so much in its infancy.

12:00 Speaker 5: They're doing a mass... They're organizing or coordinating a mass Art 150 project, where it's gonna be a series of courses in all the art schools across the country, where they're gonna be doing projects which could be any kind of project, [12:14] [REDACTED] we're centering courses around them. Do you know about this, Ryan, or is that...

12:19 S?: Art tracks.

12:19 S?: Yeah, art tracks.

12:20 JR: Okay, this is with the... There was a foundation or something that was looking particularly after that, wasn't that... Something?

12:27 S?: There's gonna be an announcement next year, curators are being selected, it's a national project.

12:33 JR: Yeah. Well, I'll get the partner with Imaginative in a different thing. So definitely, if anyone's interested in speaking more about this, you can talk to Jason, Skawennati or myself, and we'll be putting together more information as we firm it up.

12:46 S?: Well great. Anything else? Okay, great, thank you Jason.

12:51 JR: Thanks guys.